

being submitted by Senator FRIST and Senator FEINGOLD condemning the escalating violence and violation of human rights in the nation of Sierra Leone. The past six weeks we have seen the end to peace and security in that country as a result of the renewed offensive by the combined forces of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council military junta, known as the AFRC and a rebel group known as the Revolutionary United Front, or RUF in a effort to once again overthrow the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone.

The Economic Community of West African States stepped in almost a year ago, sending its Military Observer Group, called ECOMOG, to restore President Tejan Kabbah to power. Since that time, ECOMOG has been the sole thin line standing between notoriously inhumane AFRC/RUF forces and the fall of the democratically elected government.

Unfortunately on January 6 of this year, the AFRC/RUF once again attacked Freetown and continued waging an inhumane and unbelievably brutal war on the civilian population in the countryside. There are disturbing reports both in the media and from our embassy in Sierra Leone that the AFRC/RUF has rounded up civilians including men, women and children for the purposes of torture and mutilation. AFRC/RUF soldiers use machetes to amputate one or both hands, feet, ears, arms, and fingers of their civilian victims.

These reports indicate that victims are sometimes instructed to take a severed limb, body part or note to the government or ECOMOG stating that the government should replace the amputated body part, and that ECOMOG should leave Sierra Leone. These atrocities are carried out regardless of age or gender, and do not appear to be ethnically or religiously motivated.

Women and girls are kidnapped and forced into sexual slavery. Some kidnapping victims are used as labor in rebel camps. Boys and young men are compelled to join the AFRC/RUF as soldiers against their will. Witnesses say that children as young as seven years have been forcibly recruited by the rebels.

The result of the escalated violence has been the exodus of over 450,000 people into neighboring Guinea and Liberia. Nearly twice as many are wandering around within the borders of Sierra Leone, their homes and villages destroyed, vulnerable to further attacks from insurgents, without access to food or medicine.

With the help of external actors who are acting in direct violation of a United Nations arms embargo, the AFRC/RUF has been able to effectively sustain its assaults against civilians and ECOMOG troops. However, the AFRC/RUF has demonstrated no orga-

nized political platform or agenda. It enjoys no popular support among the people of Sierra Leone. In short, this group can accurately be described as a band of well armed, determined thugs.

I applaud the administration for providing aid to ECOMOG. However, as I wrote to the Secretary of State this week, and as this resolution indicates, the United States can and should do more to support ECOMOG financially. While ECOMOG is far from perfect, it is the only thing standing between the civilian population the fall of the duly elected government to indiscriminate, brutally violent AFRC/RUF forces.

It is for all of the above reasons that I join my colleagues Senators FRIST and FEINGOLD in sponsoring this resolution.

In addition to condemning the heinous actions of the AFRC/RUF rebels and the involvement of external actors in support of the rebels, the resolution urges the Administration to continue to give a high priority to solving this conflict.

Thousands of innocent men, women and children have been wounded, maimed and killed in the past months alone. We must do all we can do to bring about a swift and long-term political solution to this war. This is the only way to put a decisive end to the suffering of the population of Sierra Leone.

NOTICE OF HEARING

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a full committee hearing has been scheduled before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The hearing will take place on Thursday, March 4, 1999 at 10:00 a.m. in room SD-366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

The purpose of this hearing is to consider the nomination of Robert W. Gee to be an Assistant Secretary of the Department of Energy for Fossil Energy.

For further information, please contact David Dye of the Committee staff at (202) 224-0624.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet on Thursday, February 25, 1999, at 9:30 a.m. in open session, to receive testimony on U.S. policy regarding Kosovo.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Com-

mittee on Armed Services be authorized to meet at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, February 25, 1999, in open session, to receive testimony from the unified commanders on their military strategy and operational requirements in review of the fiscal year 2000 defense authorized request and future years defense program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, 1999, to conduct a hearing on financial services legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, for purposes of conducting a full committee hearing which is scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m. The purpose of this oversight hearing is to consider the President's proposed budget for FY2000 for the Department of Energy and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, for purposes of conducting a full committee hearing which is scheduled to begin at 2:00 p.m. The purpose of this oversight hearing is to consider the President's proposed budget for FY2000 for the U.S. Forest Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Subcommittee on Public Health, be authorized to meet for a hearing on Antimicrobial Resistance: Solutions to a Growing Public Health Threat during the session of the Senate on Thursday, February 25, 1999, at 9:30 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary, be authorized